

# DPH Announces Second Flu Death of Season; Stresses Use of Antivirals to Treat Flu Illness

**DOVER** – The Division of Public Health (DPH) is announcing the second flu-related death of the 2017-2018 flu season. The deceased, an 83-year-old New Castle County woman, passed away last week at a local hospital. She had multiple underlying health conditions and was a resident of a long-term care facility.



According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), influenza activity has increased significantly in the last few weeks, and Delaware is seeing more flu activity this season than it did at the same time last year. As of Dec. 22, 2017, Delaware has recorded 129 laboratory-confirmed flu cases this season, with 49 of those cases requiring hospitalization. At the same time last year, there were 91 laboratory-confirmed cases with 26 hospitalizations and one death.

While DPH continues to encourage flu vaccination for prevention of the flu, the Division is asking people, particularly those at high risk for complications and who believe they already have the virus, to contact their primary care provider immediately to begin treatment.

“While flu shots remain the first line of protection, it is very important this season that anyone with flu-like symptoms needs to call or go to their doctor as the doctor may put them

on antivirals,” said DPH Medical Director Dr. Awele Maduka-Ezeh. “This is particularly important for pregnant women and people with chronic health conditions.” Antiviral drugs work best when administered within 48 hours of the onset of symptoms.

DPH is also reaching out to medical providers and encouraging them to begin antiviral treatment for all hospitalized patients and all high-risk patients with suspected influenza. Antiviral drugs are prescription medicines (pills, liquid, an inhaled powder, or an intravenous solution) that fight against flu in the body. They are only available through a prescription from a health care provider.

DPH continues to offer the flu vaccine at five State Service Centers. Information for these sites can be found at [dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dph/fluclinics.html](https://dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dph/fluclinics.html). You can also Google “CDC Flu Finder” and enter your ZIP code. Additionally, the vaccine is available through many medical providers, pharmacies, and some grocery stores.

DPH recommends anyone, 6 months of age and older, who has not yet been vaccinated against the flu, to do so as soon as possible as it takes about two weeks after vaccination for antibodies to develop in the body that protect against influenza virus infection. Children 6 months to 8 years getting vaccinated for the first time should get two doses of vaccine.

In addition to getting vaccinated and taking antivirals as prescribed by your doctor, DPH also recommends:

- Keeping your distance from others if you have cold or flu-like symptoms.
- Washing your hands frequently with soap and water or use alcohol-based hand sanitizers.
- Covering sneezes and coughs with a tissue, and disposing of tissues immediately; if no tissue is available

sneezing or coughing into your inner elbow.

- Staying home if you are sick until you are free of fever for 24 hours – with a temperature of less than 100 degrees F (37.8 degrees C), without the use of fever-reducing medications for at least 24 hours.

For more information on influenza prevention, diagnosis, and treatment, call DPH at 1-800-282-8672 or visit [flu.delaware.gov](http://flu.delaware.gov).

*A person who is deaf, hard-of-hearing, deaf-blind or speech-disabled can call the DPH phone number above by using TTY services. Dial 7-1-1 or 800-232-5460 to type your conversation to a relay operator, who reads your conversation to a hearing person at DPH. The relay operator types the hearing person's spoken words back to the TTY user. To learn more about TTY availability in Delaware, visit <http://delawarerelay.com>.*

*Delaware Health and Social Services is committed to improving the quality of the lives of Delaware's citizens by promoting health and well-being, fostering self-sufficiency, and protecting vulnerable populations. DPH, a division of DHSS, urges Delawareans to make healthier choices with the 5-2-1 Almost None campaign: eat 5 or more fruits and vegetables each day, have no more than 2 hours of recreational screen time each day (includes TV, computer, gaming), get 1 or more hours of physical activity each day, and drink almost no sugary beverages.*